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ABSTRACT

Divided into three sections, this paper briefly presents Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning; surveys some key research relating childrearing practices to adolescents' social competence, including moral reasoning; and reports research findings concerning the value systems adolescents develop. The first section characterizes preconventional, conventional, and postconventional morality and explores ways of promoting the development of a mature concept of justice, which includes role taking and living in a "just community." The second section focuses on aspects of social learning, which include authoritative parenting, inductive discipline, argumentative discourse, and tradition-based upbringing. In addition, this section explores socialization practices that hinder the development of mature moral reasoning. Focusing initially on characteristics of alienated youth and parental influences on such youth, the third section describes studies investigating the values development of New York adolescents according to grade level (from fifth through twelfth grades) and sex. Also reported are English adolescents' attitudes toward the concept of an ideal, or model, person and their sense of the relative importance of values. Findings suggest that a cultural core of values held by adolescents exists and that the predominant concern of young people is for personal adjustment and good human relationships; these concerns are often linked with the desire to have an attractive appearance. (RH)

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ADOLESCENT MORALITY

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY VERSUS ALIENATION

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INTRODUCTION

Shall I have an abortion? Shall I tell on my best friend who is a drug pusher? Shall I leave home and accept an invitation to share a flat with some friends at a time when my mother is not well and needs me? What stand shall I take on various environmental issues? On uranium mining? All these questions present moral dilemmas and require decisions in terms of right and wrong. They require adolescents to understand their developing value system, which consists of, among other things, their attitudes and beliefs, their perceptions of what is right or wrong, their concept of justice.

How does the young child become a moral creature whose behaviour is increasingly guided by principles of justice, fairness, and equity? There are two major approaches to this question. One is that presented by *cognitive psychologists* such as Kohlberg (1971), Piaget (1932), and Rest (in press) who have investigated children's moral judgement, that is, how they decide what is right and what is wrong, and what one ought to do. They emphasize that children construct the basic structures or organising principles for the way they perceive their social world and the way they go about solving the moral problems that arise between themselves and others. As children become more capable of logical thought and have opportunities to interact with an increasingly wider circle of people, these structures go through successive transformations.

The other approach is that of the *social learning theorists* who hold that moral principles and values are transmitted from one generation to another through the process of socialization, which relies on modeling, and differential use of reward and punishment. The view taken in this paper is that children receive information about moral matters from those about them and, at the same time, operate on that information to construct a view of their social world that makes sense to them.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first briefly presents Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning. The second part surveys some key research which relates child rearing practices to adolescents' social competence, including moral reasoning. The third section presents research on the value systems that adolescents develop.

FOCUS ON MORAL REASONING

Kohlberg's Theory

Lawrence Kohlberg, at the Center for Moral Education, Harvard University, has outlined five stages in the development of moral thinking, which follow each other in an invariant sequence, that is, Stage 1 always precedes Stage 2, and so on. Each stage represents a more logical, a more adequate thought structure or organising principle for reasoning about the rules that guide relations between oneself and other people. The key concept in what Piaget and Kohlberg see as

mature moral judgement is reciprocity. The main feature of reciprocity is seeing others as equal to oneself and thus extending to them the respect one would extend to oneself. Reciprocity is concerned with establishing an equilibrated or balanced social system where there is a balancing of the members' rights and responsibilities arising from a sense of mutual respect.

Kohlberg's measures of social judgement present the subject with a verbally stated dilemma. The needs and motives of the chief actors are identified, as are the ways that actions of the participants affect each other. One is then asked to make a judgement about what "should" be done and why? The responses are assigned to one of three levels of moral judgement. There are two stages at levels one and two. The third level, originally represented by two stages, has now only one stage. The characteristics of the levels and their associated stages are presented below. Typical answers to the question "Why shouldn't someone steal from a store?" are given as examples.

Preconventional morality (level 1). Rules are obeyed to avoid punishment or gain personal award. Rules and social expectations thus are external to the self. In *Stage 1* obedience is seen as important for its own sake, authorities as all-knowing and all-powerful, and conformity as required to avoid punishment, "It's not good to steal from the store. It's against the law. Someone could see you and call the police.".

In *Stage 2*, right action consists of serving one's own interests and letting others do likewise. Reciprocity is of prime importance, a "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" approach. "It's alright to steal if you don't get caught."

Conventional morality (level 2). At this level it is valuable to maintain the expectations of others (family, peer group, or nation). One must be loyal to the expectations of others and to the social order. In conventional morality the self has identified with the rules and expectations of others. *Stage 3* good behaviour is defined as what pleases others or is approved of by them and one's intentions now become important. "One can steal if one were really hungry and no one were prepared to help one. People would understand and not really disapprove."

In *Stage 4*, right behaviour means doing one's duty, respecting authority, and maintaining the social order for its own sake: "It's a matter of law. It's one of our rules that we are trying to help protect everyone, protect property ... If we didn't have these laws, our whole society would get out of kilter."

Postconventional morality (level 3). Now good behaviour is defined as adherence to self-chosen moral principles which are valid and independent of the individual's identification with the group. At *Stage 5* right action involves individual rights, and standards agreed upon by society. Laws can be changed by mutual agreement and obligations should be honoured. "Stealing is violating another person's rights, in this case property."

In the longitudinal studies Kohlberg found that Level 1 is typical of children to about the age of nine, some adolescents and adult criminal offenders. Level 2 characterizes the thinking of adolescents and most adults in Western as well as other societies, and Level 3 is typical of a minority of adolescents and adults in Western societies. Philosophers and psychologists in more traditional societies such as Mexico argue that stage 4 represents the most mature moral reasoning and argue that stage 5 shows a western cultural bias.

Keniston (1970) charted the timing of moral development using Kohlberg's stages by studying middle-class American urban males and the results are shown below in Table 1.

Table 1

Age	% of Males		
	Preconventional Level	Conventional Level	Postconventional Level
10 year olds	66%	31%	3%
15 year olds	19%	46%	35%
24 year olds	12%	52%	36%

As the table indicates, only about one third of these urban middle class adolescents and young adults reasoned at the post conventional level. What is surprising is that as many 15 year olds as 24 year olds in this cross-sectional study were at the highest level. Is there, then, little development after age 15? An extensive survey of studies by Rest (in press) found that for most adults there seems to be a cessation of moral judgement development once a person leaves school. Although adults encounter many moral problems throughout their life, these studies suggest that they do not reformulate the basic conceptual tools used in dealing with them. In contrast to school leavers who cease formal education, those who do go on to higher education continue to develop towards what these researchers describe as a more mature level of moral reasoning.

Promoting the Development of a Mature Concept of Justice

According to the cognitive view, the fundamental factor causing movement towards more mature stages is *interaction with other people, social participation that requires taking the others' perspectives (role taking)*. Particularly useful are experiences of interacting with others on an equal footing, such as one finds when playing, working, arguing, discussing with one's peers. As children interact with parents, teachers and particularly peers, they come to understand the conditions of human co-operation, they move from a morality based on obedience toward a morality based on mutual respect for others in a social system where each individual values the other.

Living in a "just community" has also been found to promote moral reasoning characterised by reciprocity. Moral atmosphere or justice structure within a group has been defined as the principles which govern the assignment of rights and duties, and define the proper distribution of the benefits and burdens of social co-operation (Kohlberg et al., 1975). The "just community" programme implemented in schools and institutions by Kohlberg and his associates provides students and staff with the actual experience of participation in democratic decision making in an environment stressing norms of justice. In one such programme, the entire school met weekly at community meetings to make rules and policies and to negotiate problems as they arose. Classroom disturbances became a problem for the whole community to resolve. Once a rule was made, all classes agreed to implement it. Focus was not on administrative matters but rather on issues of fairness and morality. The basic dimension of the just community's social atmosphere is the extent to which it encourages a person to take the view of others. The moral atmosphere for the "just community" programme is perceived by its participants to be high on following conditions

(Jennings & Kohlberg, 1983):

a) a high amount of moral discussion and dialogue;
b) a high amount of students' power and responsibility for making rules, policies and decisions;
c) a high amount of perceived fairness or concern about fairness in the institution.

FOCUS ON SOCIAL LEARNING

Social learning theories attribute the origin of moral values to the impact of social influence. The socialization view is that general preferences for social goals are learned and that the origin of moral values is due to the shaping influence of parents, peers, schools and other agents.

An outstanding contribution to our understanding of how early socialization practices relate to social competence (social responsibility, mature principled moral reasoning, prosocial behaviour) has been made by Diana Baumrind and her colleagues working at the Family Socialization and Developmental Competence Project, University of California at Berkeley.

Authoritative Parenting and Inductive Discipline

Baumrind (1975, 1978) found that socially competent adolescents tended to have authoritative parenting. An authoritative parent (in contrast to an authoritarian one) is one who, when the child is young, clearly labels actions as praiseworthy or changeworthy and rewards accordingly. By being presented with an orderly series of experiences, children learn to express their individuality within limits acceptable to their parents and thus, to distinguish between conforming and deviant behaviour.

Baumrind stresses, however, that this type of firm control needs to be accompanied, particularly by the time the child reaches the age of 5-7 years, by high amounts of reasoning, explanation and communication referred to as *inductive discipline*. Inductive discipline, also found to relate to high levels of moral reasoning by other researchers (Hoffman, 1975), involves explanation to the child how his/her transgressions have hurt or distressed the parents or others. Child rearing practices that focus on the system of social relations rather than commands may provide a model of role-taking. Adolescents whose memories of early childhood include explanation of rules are more likely to model themselves on their parents.

Argumentative Discourse

In childhood parental authority is legitimized by power per se. However, as adolescents become capable of reflection and abstraction, they can formulate principles by which to judge their own and others' activities. Parents are no longer seen as all-knowing and all-powerful. They now must be ready to defend their directives on rational grounds. Negotiations, intellectual exchange, and democratic decision-making are now more effective.

Stanley (1978) found significant improvement in the moral reasoning scores of adolescents whose parents participated in a family education programme to enhance egalitarian attitudes toward family decision-making. The programme taught families democratic methods of resolving conflicts and establishing rules. "Argumentative discourse" is thus a good sign of healthy, "just" families.

Thus, where control may be an important facilitator of moral character in young children, it appears to represent a negative, restrictive influence as viewed by late adolescents. It seems important for parents to be sensitive to the changing developmental needs of their children for less control as they reach adolescence.

Traditional Upbringing

In traditional societies, the above may not apply. In these societies obedience to certain values and ideologies in accord with parental standards and values may be sanctioned by appeal to religious and patriotic values. The upbringing of the traditionalist family will emphasize firm discipline accompanied by strong affectional family ties. The adolescents from these homes have internalised an ethic of social responsibility, characteristic of stage 4 moral reasoning, in contrast to the ethic of personal conscience which underlies Kohlberg's post conventional level. There is evidence that obedience coming from social norms has different overtones than the unquestioned obedience and submission associated with authoritarian personalities. Kagitcibasi (1970) showed that her subjects in the United States who scored high on content areas of authoritarianism (i.e. respect for authority and valuing of obedience) were more likely to suffer from authoritarian personality features (i.e. dogmatic and intolerant attitudes, motivated by repressed anger and emotional coldness) than their Turkish counterparts. Kagitcibasi explained that obedience to justified authority is a basic code of decency and morality in Turkey, part of a still valued historical tradition.

American studies indicate that families who maintain a strong belief system and a traditional family structure seem best able to shield their youth from drug abuse and anomie in American culture.

Socialization Practices that Hinder the Development of Mature Moral Reasoning

In many American studies "*Harsh, exploitative, arbitrary treatment* by parents is strongly associated with anti-social ... aggression in children and adolescents" (Baumrind, 1975, p 133). Harsh parental treatment may convince the adolescent that morality is inevitably arbitrary and self-serving (Kohlberg's Stage 2), thus providing a rationale in experience for amorality (justifying any means to the end of success) or moral realism (rules are fixed, to be obeyed - Stage 1). This proposition has received extensive support in research literature and holds for both middle and lower class families. Punitive approaches to discipline, including verbal and physical abuse and unreasonable deprivations of privilege are associated with an external orientation to transgression. These crude displays of parental power characterize parents of delinquent youth. Frequently, aggressive boys are found to come from homes in which discipline is lax and inconsistent and one parent is highly punitive and the other is not (McCord et al., 1961).

Middle class delinquency is associated with a *disregard or habitual violation of the principle of reciprocity* (Baumrind, 1975). Elkind (1967) points out that there is an implicit contract between middle class parents and their children at all ages. Parents provide physical and emotional well-being in return for children obeying the norms of middle class society. A major cause of middle class delinquency is that the parent breaks the terms of the implicit contract by chronically exploiting the child. Parents may exploit the child's accomplishments to enhance their own status, or use the adolescent to gain entry in the youth culture. "Unless adult authorities are respected as moral agents, adolescents will not feel obliged ethically to abide by their rules" (Baumrind, 1975, p 134).

ALIENATED YOUTH

Some adolescents in our society suffer from alienation and estrangment in relation to society and its institutions. Baumrind (1977) notes that the beliefs of the alienated include *powerlessness* (the belief that one's own behaviour cannot determine the outcome one seeks), *isolation* from the societal goals, and *meaninglessness* or the withdrawal of value attribution from one's acts. The unifying theme is rejection of trusting, optimistic, socially-responsible other-oriented values; a rejection of concern for others' and one's own future welfare. Common symptoms of alienation are amorality, rigidity or seeking safety in routine and compliance, withdrawal in drug abuse and mental illness, and terrorism. Alienation may also be expressed through the positive values of spontaneity, expressiveness and intimacy. Some adults frequently find alienated young people attractive, not recognizing perhaps that these positive virtues are tainted by pessimism, negativism, and apathy. Keniston (1965) in a small scale study of Harvard students found that the parents of those youth that he identified as alienated, were themselves afflicted with existential despair. These students described their mothers as talented, intense, sensuous, and charismatic women who renounced vocational interests, channeling their efforts instead through their husbands and sons. Fathers were described as frustrated and disillusioned men who, like their wives, felt that they had not fulfilled their youthful dreams.

Baumrind's (1971) study showed that adolescents who claimed heavy drug use came equally from permissive and restrictive homes. Whether permissive or restrictive, the parents were described as insufficient to the challenge of rearing children and as indecisive, depressed people whom their children did not wish to emulate. Block (1972) investigated the causes of societal rejection among subjects drawn from the San Francisco Bay area. His analysis suggests that parents of alienated youth are overinvolved with their children and disappointed with their own life. Baumrind (1975) concluded that the negative attitude of many adults towards themselves and their generation, exemplified in the wave of "where did we go wrong" literature, does nothing to fill the existential vacuum which afflicts many adolescents who are groping for meaning.

Adolescent Values

As adolescents develop greater cognitive powers and carry out hypothetico-deductive reasoning, they start forming a philosophy of life around which attitudes, interests, goals and moral orientation are organized. The development of a value system provides greater stability and coherence and less fluctuation due to situational factors or social pressure. Beech and Schoeppe (1974) investigated the development in values of New York adolescents according to grade level (grades 5 to 11) and sex. They studied the growth of terminal values relating to long-term life goals and functional or instrumental values relating to the desirability of specific personal attributes. They found that as adolescents developed abstract thought, "wisdom" assumed greater importance for them. Also, as they worked through the adjustments of the transitional adolescent period to internalize a reasonably consistent ego identity, the self per se tended to be thought about and valued more. The movement upward for both sexes of "a sense of accomplishment" and "social recognition" reinforces the observation that achieving is seen as more important by adolescents as they mature. The upward movement of the instrumental values of "ambitious" and "responsible" by both sexes complements this and indicates that adolescents seem reality-oriented in stressing appropriate means to their desired goals.

Two terminal values moved steadily down in significance - "a world of beauty" and "true friendship". Beech and Schoeppe considered that the lesser value for "world of beauty" is in line with maturing adolescents' sense of realism and comprehension of other goals. The lesser value of "true friendship" is a correlate of the movement from the "clique" and the great reliance on the peer group for security in early adolescence, to a recognition of the worth of the "self" in older adolsecents. Decrease in importance of instrumental values "cheerful", "helpful", "obedient" for both boys and girls is consistent with the movement from being a dependent child to a more autonomous self-controlling adolescent.

In general, Beech and Schoeppe found a considerable stability over time and across the sexes, suggesting a cultural core of values such as a World of Peace, a World of Freedom (Table 2).

"The Young Ideal" was investigated in an English study carried out first in 1968 and then replicated and extended in 1981 (Simmons & Wade, 1983) to include 820 fourth-year pupils in six schools with different social and geographic background. Adolescents were asked to complete 10 unfinished sentences. The first sentence, "The person I would most like to be like" was based on an Ideal

Table 2

Terminal values ranked by Grade 11 boys and girls (Beeche & Schoeppe)

Rank	*Girls*	*Boys*
1	World at peace	World at peace
2	Equality	Freedom
3	Freedom	Equality
4	Wisdom	Family security
5	Self respect	Happiness
6	Happiness	Wisdom
7	Family security	A comfortable life
8	True friendship	True friendship
9	Inner harmony	Mature love
10	A sense of accomplishment	A sense of accomplishment
11	Mature love	Inner harmony
12	Social recognition	Self respect
13	A world of beauty	An exciting life
14	A comfortable life	Pleasure
15	An exciting life	National security
16	Pleasure	Social recognition
17	National security	A world of beauty
18	Salvation	Salvation

Person Test used in earlier studies (Eppel & Eppel, 1966). The responses to the first sentence indicated *(a)* the rejection of ideal models in favour of "myself" choices, *(b)* the clear preference by nearly half the subjects for ideal models characterised by attractive physical appearance and popularity and *(c)* the oversubscription of boys to material values and the oversubscription of girls to social values. This was in line with the Eppels' finding of nearly twenty years ago.

In the study 19 per cent rejected the concept of an ideal person to which they might aspire, with girls (22 per cent) rejecting the concept more than boys (16 per cent). Typical answers in this group included "I like the way I am so stuff that"; "I can't think of somebody I would like to be like. After all what is wrong with being yourself?" Some answers were even more emphatic in rejecting what is often considered a common feature of adolescence. "I would not like to be like anybody else, but be myself. I have no idols to worship nor people. I may like pop stars but they do not influence me to an extent for me wanting myself to be like them. You are what you are and nobody can change that " (girl from a mixed comprehensive school). Of the ones who did choose ideal models, only 2 per cent chose members of their family as models. "I would most like to be like mum who is very warm, helpful and courageous." About one quarter chose models who have glamorous occupations (film and television and pop stars, sports heroes). For example, "Debbie Harry from Blondie. I think she is very pretty and her life seems so exciting"; "Ritchie Blackmoore 'cause he is the lead guitarist in Rainbow and I am really into heavy rock". For nearly half of the young people studied, boys and girls, the sort of person they would most like to be like is "a person with good looks and a good personality, a person who gets on well with everybody".

A significant difference was shown between boys and girls in that out of 105 subjects (13 per cent of total sample) whose dominant value was material (e.g. money, possessions, clothes), 75 were boys and 30 girls. In contrast, the social values of friendliness, courtesy, good humour were valued by 61 girls and 45 boys.

It is worth noting that "ideal" persons representing the values of self sacrifice for social justice or human brotherhood were chosen by only 2 per cent of the total sample. For example, "I would like to be like Bob Harley was because he was a great peace fighter between blacks and whites because it is time we realised that love is better than hate and peace is better than war and we should all come together and help like God intended us to" (boy). "Someone who would achieve something in their life by helping someone, or someone who would do something for the good of society" (girl). Simmons and Wade found no overall significant difference between the six schools in their distribution of values. This was in line with previous research showing no evidence for socio-economic status as a factor in ego-ideal development.

"The picture that emerges underlines once again the fact that the predominant concern of these young people is for personal adjustment and good human relationships often linked with an attractive appearance " (Eppel & Eppel, 1966). Ideal figures from literature and history mentioned in earlier surveys were totally absent. "It would appear that radio, television, and films are the only significant sources of fictional heroes for the vast majority of young people today " Simmons and Wade concluded (p 13).

CONCLUSION

It should be noted that mature moral reasoning, socially responsible values do not necessarily translate into fair or socially responsible behaviour. Other factors such as not perceiving a situation as requiring attention or moral action, other motives and goals, mood and low level of self-regulation may intervene between what one ought to do and what one does.. Keniston (1970) notes that moral development needs to be matched by development in other sectors, namely those which involve compassion or empathetic identification with others.

Based on a Unit for Child Studies seminar, Tuesday 4th October, 1983.

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